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ABSTRACT

Using data from the Survey of State School-to-Work Opportunity Systems (1994), a study examined states' work in providing the necessary support to involve all students in school-to-work opportunity systems. The study focused on a time when the states were in the planning or very early implementation stages of school-to-work system development. Responses were received from 17 states detailing strategies targeting specific populations of youth, including the following: low-achieving students; students with disabilities; young women, including those interested in nontraditional employment areas; students from low-income families; students with limited English proficiency; students from rural communities with low population density; academically talented students; and school dropouts. The strategies tended to fall within one or more of the following categories: student supports (remediation, tutoring, counseling and career awareness, mentoring, special resource and materials development); restructured schools and new instructional methods (greater use of applied learning, integration of academic and occupational education, attention to student learning styles); expanded use of alternative learning opportunities; special work-based learning experiences designed to engage youth, and expansion and use of school-to-work models; technical assistance and staff inservice training; collaboration and partnership activities; comprehensive or multipronged strategies; and federal or state programs. (YLB)

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Ensuring

ALL STUDENTS

Access to

SCHOOL-TO-WORK

Opportunity

SYSTEMS

in the

STATES

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Ensuring All Students Access to School-to-Work Opportunity Systems in the States

By Glenda Partee

Fifth in a Series on School-to-Work Implementation

Council of Chief State School Officers
Washington, DC
1995

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nationwide, nonprofit organization of the 57 public officials who head departments of public education in the 50 states, five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Dependents Schools. It has functioned as an independent national council since 1927 and has maintained a Washington office since 1948. CCSSO seeks its members' consensus on major education issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, to federal agencies, to Congress, and to the public. Through its structure of committees and task forces, the Council responds to a broad range of concerns about education and provides leadership on major education issues.

Because the Council represents each state's chief education administrator, it has access to the educational and governmental establishment in each state and to the national influence that accompanies this unique position. CCSSO forms coalitions with many other education organizations and is able to provide leadership for a variety of policy concerns that affect elementary and secondary education. Thus, CCSSO members are able to act cooperatively on matters vital to the education of America's young people.

The CCSSO Resource Center on Educational Equity provides services designed to achieve equity and high quality education for minorities, women and girls, and for the disabled, limited English proficient, and low-income students. The Center is responsible for managing and staffing a variety of CCSSO leadership initiatives to assure education success for all children and youth, especially those placed at risk of school failure.

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Series Introduction

In 1991 the Council of Chief State School Officers established a multiyear priority of improving connections between school and employment for all students. The Council's aim is to improve education and experiences that bridge youth and adulthood and prepare American youth for immediate or eventual entry into the world of employment. A formal policy statement adopted by the Council in 1991, Connecting School and Employment, set in motion a series of activities and reports for improving paths for American youth to prepare for productive employment; restructuring schools to support this objective; and identifying new responsibilities for schools, businesses, employee organizations, and postsecondary institutions to establish sound career preparation patterns for the majority of our youth. The policy statement was an effort to recognize the need for developing successful (1) methods of integrating academic and occupational education and work-based learning, such as high-quality cooperative education, youth apprenticeship, and service learning; and (2) high school programs that result in a high school diploma, postsecondary credential, and certification of occupational skills.

On March 31, 1994, President Clinton signed into law the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. Title I of the Act identifies eight goals to be reached by the year 2000 that call for all children to be ready to learn; a high school graduation rate of at least 90 percent; students demonstrating competency over challenging subject matter when they leave grades 4, 8, and 12; professional development for teachers; American students' achievement first in the world in math and science; universal literacy for America to compete in a global economy; schools free of drugs, alcohol, and violence and offering a disciplined environment conducive to learning; and partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children.

Shortly after Goals 2000 established a framework to improve education in the United States, President Clinton signed into law, on May 5, 1994, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994. It specifically provides guidance for states to establish systems that address Goal 6: Every American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy. The guidance provided in the School-to-Work Act identifies the common features, basic program components and student outcomes of a school-to-work transition system. A school-to-work transition system would be statewide and (1) help youth acquire the skills, abilities, and labor market information needed to make a smooth transition from school to career-oriented work or further education or training; (2) have substantial impact on the preparation of youth for a first job in a high-skill, high-wage career and in increasing opportunities for further education; and (3) support new and expanded ways of integrating work-based and school-based learning, occupational and academic learning, and strengthening the linkages between secondary and post secondary education.

To assist states in the development and implementation of school-to-work systems and encourage states' progress toward achieving Goal 6, the Council has invited or commissioned a series of articles to focus on issues of significance in designing school-to-work transition systems in states. To keep pace with a fast-moving policy domain, the topics for articles will be flexible, over the course of the year. The Council will publish the articles in a series, make them available through electronic media, and compile the work in a final document that will be widely disseminated.

Support for the series is provided, in part, by The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Ford Foundation, Exxon Education Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration.

This article, "Ensuring All Students Access to School-to-Work Opportunity Systems in the States," was prepared by the author based on survey research data from CCSSO's Survey of State School-to-Work Opportunity Systems (1994). The article reflects states' work in providing the necessary support to involve all students in school-to-work opportunity systems, during a time when they were in the planning or very early implementation stages of school-to-work system development. The information presented should be considered as baseline for measuring progress as system development continues through the 1990s. The views expressed in this article by Dr. Partee are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Council.

Introduction

This article is based on a survey of state school-to-work opportunity systems conducted by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in the summer of 1994. It was undertaken at a time when Council members[1] were in the planning or early implementation stages of school-to-work system development. The information collected should therefore be considered as a baseline for measuring progress as system development continues through the 1990s.

The focus of this article is on responses to one survey item:

> Describe goals and strategies that will be or are being used to ensure equal access to the full range of program components and related activities of school-to-work opportunities programs for each of the following groups of students:
>
> - low-achieving students
> - students with disabilities
> - young women, including those interested in nontraditional employment areas
> - students from low-income families
> - students with limited English proficiency
> - students from rural communities with low population density
> - academically talented students
> - school dropouts
> - others (to be described by the states).

This information was requested to determine efforts on the part of states to fulfill the purposes of the School to Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) addressing the need to create a universal, high-quality school-to-work transition system for youth; help all students attain high academic and occupational standards; motivate all youths, including low-achieving youths, school dropouts, and youths with disabilities, to stay in or return to school or a classroom setting and strive to succeed; and increase opportunities for minorities, women, and people with disabilities, by enabling individuals to prepare for careers that are not traditional for their student race, gender, or disability group. Responses were received from 47 state education agencies to the survey question about the goals and strategies planned or in place in the respective states and jurisdictions. Of these, 6 answered the section with "N/A," which indicates that they do not have the information necessary to answer the question; 2 left the section blank; 22 gave general answers that were not specific to or were inclusive of all the student groups; and 17 provided strategies that were specific to the student groups described in the survey.

[1] The CCSSO membership includes the 50 states, 5 extra-state jurisdictions, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Dependents Schools.

Ensuring All Students Access to School-to-Work Opportunity Systems in the States

By Glenda Partee

Dr. Partee is co-director of the American Youth Policy Forum, Washington, DC. The views expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Council or its funding source.

State Goals for Including All Students

Several states responding to the survey (Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Georgia) have made a general commitment to providing access for all students to school-to-work opportunity programs. This commitment appears to be a critical first step in addressing targeted student needs. In many states, strategies to support the access and participation goals for specific groups of students have yet to be developed or are in the initial planning stages (Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island). States recognize numerous programs and activities that potentially support state school-to-work systems. Though these programs do not currently incorporate the critical elements of school-to-work programs, they are being examined for possible applicability as plans are developed to establish systems that can serve all students (e.g., Ohio). In some states, the planning and design of specific strategies for special student populations (Florida and Virginia) are being done in consultation with representatives of constituent groups of these special student populations.

Several states describe specific mechanisms for ensuring access and participation. Strategies include reliance on existing federal (e.g., for Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology grants) or state equal access monitoring and compliance activities (District of Columbia, New Mexico, Tennessee, Washington); state policy provisions (Tennessee); or legislation mandating inclusion of all students (South Carolina) with specific strategies for special populations (Wisconsin).

Among states that have developed policies to ensure inclusion of specific student groups, Wisconsin has linked its Children At Risk efforts directly to the school-to-work system by requiring local partnerships, as a condition of applying for planning or implementation grants, to demonstrate ways of encouraging at-risk students to enroll in a school-to-work opportunity program. Programs that receive funds for implementation are required to develop a plan that contains specific descriptions of all additional "connecting activities" (i.e., special liaison, support services, nonwork mentoring, or counseling) that will be used to address the needs of at-risk youth. The Department of Public Instruction is currently in the process of proposing amendments to its Administrative Rules for Children At Risk Programs, Chapter PI 25, to reflect these systemic linkages.

Kentucky seeks to develop an equal access/opportunities system in which staff and resources across state agencies, such as the Department of Technical Education, Department of Adult Education and Literacy, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and the Department of the Blind, will engage in the following activities:

- Support Local Partnership Councils and local program operators in conducting recruitment of all Kentucky students in extensive career exploration, beginning in the primary school grades
- Provide all students with opportunities to have a work-site mentor
- Provide teachers, counselors, business owners, and work-site supervisory with resources and training

in developing work-site learning and paid work experiences for students in special populations

- Conduct a transportation needs analysis for each labor market area and develop an implementation plan.

Some states have conceived their system of school-to-work transition as broadly inclusive of all students and view general education reforms, collaborative activities, and institution of comprehensive career development efforts as essential components to achieving the goal of equal access and participation. For example, the Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS) use a Competency Based Guidance (CBG) Program to inform students of career options and help them to make choices in their courses and preparation to meet the requirements in various careers. Texas' evolving school-to-work transition efforts are designed to help all students acquire the knowledge and skills they must have to succeed in the working world and to assist them in making that transition as smoothly as possible. By focusing on excellence and equity for all students, Texas serves the needs of many student groups. Tennessee has developed a range of encompassing strategies, including the following:

- Reliance on equal access provisions in state policy
- Access for all students to a rigorous core curriculum that includes challenging subject matter and emphasizes depth rather than breadth of coverage, critical thinking, and problem solving
- Interdisciplinary activities and programs developed collaboratively by academic, vocational, and special education faculties of local secondary schools
- Inclusion of special populations in regular classes
- Collaboration with community service agencies, interagency cooperative agreements, and coordination with emerging state and federal initiatives
- Access to comprehensive career development programs, including development of a four-year plan of focused and purposeful study for all students prior to 9th grade

Some states will build on existing programs to provide necessary student supports to help students stay in school and succeed, such as Maryland's Tomorrow program that targets low-achieving students. Maryland will also rely on current efforts to increase access to and completion of career and technology education programs for special populations; and provide extra help to students so that they may achieve higher expectations in mathematics, science and reading (e.g., through activities and practices of the Southern Region Education Board Vocational Technical Education Consortia's High Schools That Work Program[2]). Oklahoma will focus its efforts on improving career awareness and career development for all youth. Arkansas is identifying current programs focusing on special populations within the state, with a goal of replicating successful programs statewide.

Other state strategies encompass reliance on accountability measures and outcome standards. For example, Florida has state legislation that ties school-to-work strategies to the state's accountability measures requiring efforts to address the needs of all students. Among New Jersey's Program Performance Measures and Standards are evidence of access and success for special populations, such as attainment of basic and advanced academic skills, and marketable occupational competencies; retention and completion rates; and lifelong learning elements. To guarantee that all students receive the support necessary to help them realize the outcome standards of the system, Oregon has designed a variety of strategies that are detailed in subsequent sections by specific student population. The state expects that there will be local variation in these strategies and encourages local innovation to meet the challenge of providing school-to-work opportunities for all students. Texas' Results Based Monitoring (RBM) program provides districts with a self-evaluation tool that helps them gage the success of students. RBM will help schools improve school-to-work transition as it measures the performance of students preparing for current and emerging labor market needs, the achievement of students participating in a school-to-work transition option, and student achievement in occupational competency in their chosen career major.

New Jersey intends to act on findings of task forces set up to investigate particular barriers for special populations. For example, the findings of the Gender Equity Task Force and the At-Risk Youth and Individuals with Disabilities Task Force underscore the need to embrace a new understanding of the potential of all New Jersey citizens and call for sys-

[2] The "High Schools That Work" program exists in a number of other states (e.g., Texas).

temic changes in attitude and behavior that reinforce notions of stereotyped jobs and opportunities among youth. The Task Forces particularly stress the need for action at the primary education level to change these attitudes and behaviors.

State Goals and Strategies for Specific Populations of Students

Responses were received from 17 states detailing strategies targeting specific populations of youth. These strategies tended to fall within one or more of the following categories:

- Student supports (e.g., remediation, tutoring, counseling and career awareness, mentoring, and special resource and materials development)
- Restructured schools and new instructional methods (e.g., greater use of applied learning, integration of academic and occupational education; and attention to student learning styles)
- Expanded use of alternative learning opportunities
- Special work-based learning experiences designed to engage youth, and expansion and use of school-to-work models, such as Tech Prep, Jobs for America's Graduates, and cooperative education
- Technical assistance and staff inservice training
- Collaboration and partnership activities
- Comprehensive or multiprong strategies
- Federal or state programs and policies (e.g., Job Training Partnership Act [JTPA], Perkins, Adult Education) often supportive of the other categories, such as student supports and work-based learning experiences.

Low-Achieving Students

Low-achieving students will have access to school-to-work programs through a variety of special strategies, such as student supports, alternative learning opportunities, new instructional methods, and expanded work-based learning experiences. Table 1 shows the range of strategies developed by states to ensure access and success for low-achieving students in school-to-work activities.

Student Supports

Among strategies developed to assist low-achieving students to succeed in school-to-work opportunities programs, DoDDS provides a special college preparatory program for students, especially those most underrepresented in postsecondary education, designed to help them succeed in academic classes and open up their career choices in the world of work.

Iowa is using mentors and outreach activities as well as facilitating greater collaboration between school-to-work personnel and staff that support programs targeting at-risk youth. At the postsecondary level, the Illinois community colleges use assessment tools to determine the aptitude of entering students. Stu-

Table 1

Strategies for Low-Achieving Students

Strategies	States
Student Supports	DoDDS, Iowa, Illinois, Oklahoma, Texas, Virgin Islands
Restructured schools or new instructional methods	Illinois, Iowa, Nevada, Texas
Alternative learning opportunities	Oregon
Work-based learning experiences/school-to-work models	Ohio, Texas
Comprehensive strategies	Kentucky
Federal or state programs and policies (see student supports)	Indiana, Mississippi

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dents identified as needing remediation are provided coursework, counseling, and tutoring, as appropriate, to help them succeed within a traditional college program.

Oklahoma is using career awareness and development, counseling, outreach, and awareness activities, as well as individualized plans of study and other student preparatory services. Texas provides career awareness and guidance counseling to students in elementary and middle schools. Through the Virgin Islands Counselors and Guidance State Plan, materials and resources will be developed and provided for all low-achieving students to obtain the necessary basic academic and employability skills. In addition, the local State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (SOICC) has developed materials and resources that may be used by teachers and counselors. The local business community will be encouraged to participate as speakers and resources.

Restructured Schools or New Instructional Methods

Illinois is increasing the number of instructors that use applied teaching techniques, providing joint planning time for academic and occupational teachers, and improving the quality and content of inservice training for teachers. Through Tech Prep and other initiatives, Iowa is emphasizing integrated and applied learning, as well as accommodation of learning styles. Nevada is integrating academics into occupational programs.

In the belief that low expectations often lead to low performance, Texas has phased out low-level academic classes for students in vocational programs. Students who graduate from training programs must now meet high academic standards, thus taking better academic skills into the workplace. About 85 percent of Texas schools have reported efforts to integrate academic and vocational education; and increasing numbers of schools now use block scheduling, applied learning, joint planning time, and other techniques to enhance student performance and preparation for the world of work. In addition, professional development efforts are designed to support teachers, administrators, and counselors in achieving these changes. Texas schools are increasingly adopting Henry Levin's Accelerated School model, which helps low-achieving students improve their success in school. The Texas Education Agency encourages schools to assist students in choosing general career major—a strategy that encourages low-performing students to plan for their futures.

Alternative Learning Opportunities

Oregon is accommodating the diversity of in- and out-of-school youth at risk of not achieving Certificate of Initial Mastery or Certificate of Advanced Mastery outcomes by offering a comprehensive system of alternative learning opportunities in a variety of learning environments. These alternative opportunities are being created through local partnerships that combine the services and resources of local school districts, businesses, community colleges, private industry councils, juvenile justice agencies, and other private and public organizations to forge local models tailored to the needs and resources of local communities. Among the techniques and services of Oregon's alternative learning system are integrated curriculum, interdisciplinary instructional teams, applied learning activities, case management, use of the community as an extended "classroom," and a wide range of work-based learning activities. Also common to each local alternative learning program are marketing and outreach components designed to convince out-of-school youth to take advantage of these opportunities.

Work-Based Learning and School-to-Work Models

Ohio has developed a number of programs designed to provide work experiences for low-achieving students. Among these are: Occupational Labs that prepare students to obtain and hold jobs through opportunities for structured assembly work; Occupational Work Adjustment (OWA), a cooperative vocational education program with learning experiences related to work adjustment in private and public paid employment; and Occupational Work Experience (OWE) that provides paid employment in single/semi-skilled occupations and assists youth to graduate from high school. Ohio's Jobs for Ohio's Graduates (JOG) assists at-risk seniors to stay in school and graduate by preparing them to get and keep a job.

In Texas, career and technology education courses require students to participate in a work-based learning component. For example, students focusing on agricultural science must participate in an agribusiness-based experiential learning component. This activity, coupled with a general emphasis on career majors

for students, has led to a dramatic increase in participation in agriculture programs among students with nonfarm backgrounds, youth with disabilities, urban youth, females, ethnic minorities, and students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds.

Comprehensive or Multiprong Strategies

Kentucky has developed a range of strategies to support the success of low-achieving students under the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA). These strategies include:

- Collaboration among Departments of Education, Technical Education and Adult Education to identify, develop and train teachers and counselors in the use of state-of-the art assessment tools and methods
- Expanded capacity of family literacy programs in each labor market to provide assistance to teachers, counselors, Family Resource and Youth Service Centers and local adult literacy providers
- Student support by counselors to increase career and wage expectations and identify assistance needed to improve academic performance to accomplish career goals
- Assistance to teachers and work site supervisors from the Departments of Education and Technical Education in developing team teaching approaches that integrate students' individual education plans and individual work site training plans
- Assistance to schools from the Departments of Education and Technical Education to adopt student clustering models that allow students pursuing similar career majors to develop peer support network.

Federal or State Programs and Policies

Indiana is using Perkins local funds to provide tutors, mentors and computerized remediation programs to improve success rates in vocational programs and to improve graduation rates. Mississippi envisions tapping JTPA resources to promote work-based learning as part of Tech Prep and for assisting at-risk students with the tutoring necessary to succeed in rigorous Tech Prep curricula. In addition, Adult Education Act funds support basic skills and GED classes throughout the state and can provide employability and career development activities for individuals 16 to 21 years of age. STWOA resources will be used to augment Adult Education program activities such as curriculum development, speakers, and audiovisual aids.

Students with Disabilities

States are using a range of strategies to ensure the inclusion of students with disabilities in school-to-work programs. Among these strategies are the following:

- Student support services
- Restructured schools and new instructional methods and content
- Technical assistance and professional development activities for local educators, mentors, and employers
- Collaboration and partnership activities to identify and expand work-based learning opportunities, services, and supports, as well as training and technical assistance
- Comprehensive or multipronged approaches, including improved student services, planning and identification of best practices, recruitment, and dissemination of information on the availability of employment/training services
- Reliance on federal program requirements.

Table 2 lists the range of strategies developed by states to ensure access and success for students with disabilities.

Student Supports

Although an overall system is not in place at this time, many colleges within the Illinois community college system offer services such as interpreters, note takers, and adaptive equipment. Indiana uses its federal school-to-work grant to promote effective high school preparation, including self-advocacy and availability of employment/training services for people with disabilities.

In New Hampshire, vocational rehabilitation counselors work with students in most high schools, ensuring equal access to work opportunities and related classroom instruction. Oklahoma provides services such as

Table 2

Strategies for Students with Disabilities

Strategies	States
Student supports	Illinois, Indiana, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Texas, Virgin Islands
Restructured schools and new instructional methods and content	Iowa, Virgin Islands
Work-based learning/school-to- work models	Ohio
Technical assistance and staff training	Illinois, Oregon, Tennessee
Collaboration and partnership activities	Kentucky, Mississippi, Nevada, Oregon, Tennessee
Comprehensive or multiprong strategies	New York
Federal or state programs and policies	DoDDS, Indiana, Kentucky, New Jersey, Ohio, Tennessee

career awareness, development, and counseling; early identification of disabilities; speech pathology and audiology; physical and occupational therapy; graduation assistance programs; and outreach and awareness activities. Texas offers school-to-work transition services for all special education participants beginning at age 16. The Virgin Islands has developed materials and resources for all students with disabilities to obtain basic academic and employability skills necessary in school and out of school.

Restructured Schools and New Instructional Methods and Content

Iowa is planning curriculum modification, integration, and work-site learning experiences through Work Start Programs, cooperative teaching strategies, and is tailoring curriculum and instruction to individual learning styles to ensure maximum success and opportunities for students with disabilities. In addition, community colleges, vocational rehabilitation, and special education are working together to ensure effective transitions to the work force for adult students with special needs. The Virgin Islands is developing a comprehensive program to expand the career options of students with disabilities who plan to enter the work force immediately after high school. A special education school-to-work curriculum will present a range of creative and varied activities, such as vocational interest assessments, resume analyses, and career game exercises. The curriculum will help students assess their talents and goals, learn about career options open to them, and build necessary skills.

Work-Based Learning and School-to-Work Models

Ohio is expanding opportunities for students to develop technical skills and to access Tech Prep programs.

Technical Assistance and Staff Training

The Illinois Transition Coordinating Council (ITCC), with which the Illinois community college system is involved, assists communities with transition planning and services and the promotion of best practices. The ITCC has funded numerous special needs projects through its JTPA funds over the past six years. Oregon will provide technical assistance and training for teachers, mentors, employers, and counselors on counseling and training youth with disabilities for occupations and industries in which they have historically been underrepresented. The Tennessee State Department of Education staff provide technical assistance, professional development, and inservice training for local educators, as well as local education program monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates are properly applied at the local district and school levels.

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Collaboration and Partnership Activities

Collaboration and partnership activities are important elements in many states for providing technical assistance and staff development, identifying sites for work-based learning, and providing services and supports. In Kentucky, the Departments of Vocational Rehabilitation, Blind, Education and Technical Education will collaborate to develop and deliver training sessions for Local Partnership Councils and groups developing local school-to-work programs. The State Office of School-to-Work and business, industry, and labor organizations are developing a Speaker's Bureau of Employed Adults with Disabilities. The Department of Employment Services and the Kentucky Job Training Coordinating Council will work with Private Industry Councils (PICs), Area Development Districts (ADDs), and local education agencies to identify accessible work sites in each labor market area.

In Mississippi, the Department of Rehabilitation, the Association for the Rights of Disabled People, and the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision have become partners with the school-to-work initiative to ensure that students with disabilities have access to appropriate school-to-work opportunities. Their resources will be used to identify appropriate sites for work-based learning experiences.

Nevada is networking with vocational rehabilitation to ensure the provision of all available services for students with disabilities. The Oregon Department of Education, Vocational Rehabilitation Division, and local districts are working collaboratively to develop the necessary supports to ensure the success of youth with disabilities. In Tennessee, local special education and vocational education administrators are encouraged to work collaboratively to ensure that students with disabilities are afforded the rights and protections guaranteed them under relevant sections of the IDEA. The Departments of Education, Human Services and Mental Health, and Divisions of Special Education, Vocational Education, Rehabilitation Services, and Mental Retardation have entered into an Interagency Cooperative Agreement that specifies the duties and responsibilities of each department and division in meeting the needs of people with disabilities. Through state-sponsored professional development inservice training, staff members of the various divisions train local educators to develop their own interagency cooperative agreements designed to promote collaborative teamwork among all agencies involved in assisting youth with disabilities in making the transition from school to employment or postsecondary career training opportunities.

Comprehensive or Multiprong Strategies

A major school-to-work transition initiative specifically focused on the transition of students with disabilities into meaningful employment or further education is administered through the New York State Education Department's Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID). This initiative includes the establishment of seven Transition Coordination Sites to serve youth with disabilities through the coordination of existing resources and transition programs. Coordination and local implementation is conducted as follows:

- Identification of regional and local transition needs
- Access to and use of existing expertise, resources and services
- Development and implementation of appropriate transitional services
- Implementation of state and federal policy
- Dissemination of transition information.

These sites will be key participants in the School-to-Work Opportunities system to ensure full access for students with disabilities, including those who represent racial and ethnic minorities or who have limited English proficiency.

Federal or State Programs and Policies

The services and mandates of the IDEA ensuring equal access of students with disabilities to the full range of educational programs drives and frames strategies in many states. The DoDDS will rely on individualized education plans (IEPs) to determine student placement and services.

New Jersey is using a grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs to implement programs to assist in the transition of youth with disabilities from school to adult life. The grants forge a working relationship between the New Jersey Department of Education and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. The goal is to ensure that each pupil leaves school with a marketable skill and maxi-

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mum self-sufficiency so that they will be responsible citizens, able to enter further education, and enjoy productive employment. To achieve this goal, New Jersey employs a number of strategies, as follows:

- The formation of a State Interagency Work Group to increase the availability, access to, and quality of transition assistance through the development and improvement of policies, procedures, resources, systems, and other mechanisms affecting service delivery
- The use of a Statewide Transition Advisory Council with representation from all major interest groups to help achieve consensus on the application of transition services to meet the needs of youth with disabilities
- The use of comprehensive training and technical assistance services to school systems, students and families, local transition teams, private sector employers, adult service providers, and state and local governmental agencies
- The awarding of competitive grants for local model demonstration projects that promote best practices in secondary special education and transition
- Ongoing dissemination of information on transition services, best practices, model demonstration efforts and their outcomes, program evaluation findings, and data-collection activities to relevant state agencies, advisory boards, local education agencies, families, advocates, and other appropriate public groups.

Ohio's Project LIFE supports five local Interagency Transition Teams to develop school-to-work models for youth with disabilities. These models have been funded through a five-year, systems change grant awarded to the Ohio Department of Education in cooperation with eight state agencies. The models will be used to develop effective policies and practices for improving how youth with disabilities make transitions from school to employment and become lifelong learners.

In Tennessee, students with disabilities will be placed in the least restrictive vocational programs as determined by an interdisciplinary team of local educators so that such placement will be appropriate and in keeping with the student's career goals. Students with disabilities are ensured equal access to the full range of vocational programs available to other students, including occupationally specific courses, cooperative education, and work-based learning through youth apprenticeship programs, as well as in recruitment, enrollment, and placement activities.

Indiana uses Perkins Act local funds to develop special recruitment strategies and a range of support services to improve student success. Kentucky is currently engaged in a comprehensive capital improvement program to upgrade existing education facilities and build new, accessible facilities for students with disabilities.

Young Women, Including Those Interested in Nontraditional Employment Areas

Among the barriers to access and participation of young women in school-to-work programs leading to nontraditional careers, the following were cited by one state:

- The way women perceive themselves and the way teachers, parents, employers perceive women's roles and options in the workplace
- Limited nontraditional job opportunities in most counties and limited exposure to nontraditional role models
- Limited access to child care and transportation
- Lack of knowledge and exploration of a variety of occupations
- Gender-biased tests and instructional methods.

States indicated a number of strategies to address these and other barriers to the full access and participation of young women in school-to-work programs and activities. Among the strategies cited are the following:

- Develop policies that require grantees and contractors to involve female participants in nontraditional training and occupations
- Put support services in place
- Use special programs
- Rely on collaboration and partnerships, technical assistance, and federal program resources
- Develop comprehensive strategies to ensure participation and success for young women in school-to-work opportunity programs

Table 3 lists the range of strategies developed by states.

Student Supports

Among the strategies cited, Iowa uses mentors as nontraditional role models for females. The Mississippi school-to-work plan encourages young women to enter nontraditional employment and has in place mentor and speaker availability programs through the Mississippi Federation of Business and Professional Women. In addition, the School-to-Work Division has tapped into programs and plans to use club members in nontraditional jobs as resource people for school programs. Oklahoma provides career awareness and development, counseling, pilot programs, outreach and awareness activities, student recruitment, marketing, and supportive services targeting young women for nontraditional careers.

Technical Assistance

Oregon will provide technical assistance and training for teachers, mentors, employers, and counselors on counseling and training women for occupations and industries in which they have been historically underrepresented.

Collaboration and Partnership Activities

In Kentucky, the Department of Education and Technical Education will collaborate with business to develop career exploration curriculum modules, materials, and media to expose students and parents to nontraditional occupations and work sites. The Kentucky Occupational Information Coordinating Committee and the Department of Employment Services will work with PICs, ADDs, and local education agencies to develop profiles of nontraditional occupations and work sites for each labor market. Local Partnership Councils will coordinate child career assistance through Family Resource and Youth Service Centers. The state office of school-to-work will collaborate with state business, industry, and labor organizations to develop a speaker's bureau of Kentucky women in nontraditional occupations.

The New Hampshire gender equity consultant for the Department of Education and the apprenticeship representative for the department of labor collaborate to ensure that women are interested in and exposed to nontraditional career options.

Comprehensive Strategies

New York has developed a comprehensive strategy that includes:

- Involvement of the State Sex Equity Administrator in the implementation of the School-to-Work Plan
- Representation of advocacy groups for women, minorities, and people with disabilities in efforts to identify and implement strategies to create greater access for members of these groups
- Identification and use of existing resources to assist in the training and technical support for women

Table 3

Strategies for Young Women

Strategies	States
Student supports	Iowa, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Texas (see federal and state programs)
Technical assistance	Oregon
Collaboration and partnership activities	Kentucky, New Hampshire
Comprehensive strategies	New York, Wisconsin
Federal and state programs and policies	DoDDS, Illinois, Indiana, Mississippi, Nevada, Ohio, Texas, Virgin Islands

- Inclusion of employers of nontraditional workers on planning committees and building on the experiences of their training/development and human resource staff in recruiting and maintaining nontraditional workers
- Collaboration among the state sex equity administrator and representatives of other state agencies to provide linkages to the provisions of the Carl Perkins, Sex Equity, Nontraditional Employment for Women Acts, and other federal provisions on nontraditional employment
- Identification and development of nontraditional role model mentoring, internships, and job-shadowing opportunities. Particular emphasis will be placed on careers requiring advanced mathematics, science, and technology preparation
- Review and revision of assessment, testing, and counseling materials and methods to eliminate gender bias
- Creation of equitable learning environments that address the needs of nontraditional students through staff development programs and identification of best practices in teaching methods
- Institution of strict policies concerning sexual harassment in all school-to-work programs and availability of information on these policies in staff development and curricular materials
- Inclusion of equity issues in the workplace as employability outcomes
- A focus on addressing the child care needs of single-parent students.

Wisconsin has developed a comprehensive equity program designed to be used at the local level. The program (1) provides educators with specific tools and resources they need to implement a local equity program; (2) incorporates the use of student competencies and focuses on the achievement of equity; and (3) establishes benchmarks and standards to help local groups assess progress. (See, e.g., Wisconsin Model for Sex Equity in Career and Vocational Education, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, March 1993.)

Federal and State Programs and Policies

Some states are developing their own special programs; others are relying on federal programmatic initiatives already in place. DoDDS has an extensive Junior Reserve Officers Training (JROTC) program through the air force, army, navy, and marine components of the military that instill leadership skills in all its students and encourage the participation of women.

In Illinois, Training for Jobs, a JTPA-administered program, addresses a broad array of skills, vocational and academic training, and supportive services needed by postsecondary individuals who are economically disadvantaged. Along with literacy and lifelong learning, special emphasis is placed on employment training for women in nontraditional employment. Two community colleges currently serve as pilot projects for the federally funded Nontraditional Employment for Women grant, and a representative from the Illinois Community College Board serves on the Statewide Nontraditional Leadership Team. Illinois also requires that requests for proposals (RFPs) for all work-based learning activities include an emphasis on recruiting women into nontraditional careers. The Tech Prep application also focuses on serving nontraditional students.

Indiana uses Carl D. Perkins Vocational Technical Education state funds to support the Gender Equity Through Institutional Change Project to provide student support services, career counseling, community activities, and nontraditional apprenticeships. In Mississippi, proposers for state job training subcontracts will be required to indicate how they will attract women to participate in nontraditional job training.

Nevada has developed a sex equity component of its school-to-work plan to promote entry of young women into nontraditional careers. Ohio's Orientation to Nontraditional Occupations for Women Program is designed to achieve similar results. In the Virgin Islands, each school will be encouraged to select or develop a career education program to assist young women, including those interested in nontraditional employment areas, to become successful in the academic and work world. The program will explore the connection between school and work and help young women discover the diversity of jobs and benefits available to those with technical and trade skills.

Texas uses more than $4.5 million of Perkins funds to provide career awareness and career exploration activities to students (and teachers) about nontradi-

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tional career opportunities for women. Among these activities are internships, mentoring, speakers bureaus, information dissemination, instructional support, and faculty development. Student support services include dependent care, transportation, textbook loans, tutoring, and career guidance and counseling. Resource centers have been established in the state's education service centers to provide schools access to materials and techniques that focus on eliminating sex bias and sex stereotyping.

Through the state-funded Pregnancy, Education, and Parenting (PEP) program, Texas provides $12.3 million to programs that enable school-age parents, through education, to become self-sufficient, responsible, job-oriented citizens. The 248 program sites aim to reduce the number of students who drop out of school due to pregnancy or parenthood and to recover young parents who are 21 years of age or younger and return them to the educational system. PEP programs offer individual counseling, peer counseling, self-help programs, job readiness training, child care, parenting instruction, and assistance in obtaining services from government agencies or community service organizations.

Students from Low-Income Families

Several states acknowledged that it is unrealistic and unfair to expect all students to achieve the same high standards of excellence without providing additional supports to those who need it. As a result, many states are developing or are using existing programs aimed at providing these extra supports. Many of the strategies described for the preceding special youth populations apply to students from low-income families, such as JTPA programs that also address the needs of low-income females, or special work experiences designed to motivate and support low-achieving students. Because low-income students also fall into other special population categories, some states are taking a more comprehensive approach. One state is focusing on service integration targeted on at-risk youth and their families; another is developing systemic responses necessary to help all students meet high expectations. Another state has developed systemic responses, including early career guidance integrated into the curriculum, applied contextual learning, and a wide choice of career pathways. Table 4 lists the range of strategies developed by states.

Student Supports

Among the support services provided in Iowa are transportation and child care reimbursement, and the waiver of instructional fees. Nevada provides auxiliary student services, such as transportation. Oklahoma provides career awareness and development, counseling, medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes, school health services, and graduation assistance programs.

Collaboration and Partnership Activities

The Oregon Departments of Education and Human Resources are working cooperatively on service integration projects targeted to high-risk students and their families. Oregon is committed to providing the services and support—case management, one-on-one tutoring, extra summer classes, family counseling, and additional workplace and classroom accommodations—necessary to help all students meet high expectations.

Table 4

Strategies for Students from Low-Income Families

Strategies	States
Student supports	Iowa, Nevada, Oklahoma
Collaboration and partnership activities	Oregon
Comprehensive strategies	Wisconsin, Texas
Federal or state programs and policies	Illinois, Indiana, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Ohio

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Comprehensive Strategies

Wisconsin is developing systemic responses that are appropriate to all students. These responses include developmental guidance; early career information integrated into the curriculum; regular assessments of academic progress; applied, integrated, contextual, experiential learning that is more motivating; and a wide choice of learning pathways. In addition, the state will make efforts to provide all necessary support services directed at addressing individual needs. Under the state statute, school boards must establish procedures to identify children at risk who are enrolled in the district and provide programming to meet their needs through curriculum modification, alternative programs, community support services, and other approaches. Certain school districts (those with high concentrations of at-risk students) must file a Children At Risk plan with the state, and qualify for additional state aid. These schools must also submit reports detailing outcomes for those students who have been identified as being at-risk (e.g., attendance, retention, progress, skill development, and graduation).

Texas schools target students in at-risk situations. State statute requires each school district to appoint an at-risk coordinator, who identifies students who are at risk of dropping out of school and coordinates efforts to help them. Comprehensive strategies similar to those used in Wisconsin are applied.

Federal or State Programs and Policies

In Illinois, the Training for Jobs Program, a JTPA-administered program, addresses a broad array of skills, vocational and academic training, and supportive services needed by postsecondary individuals who are economically disadvantaged. Along with literacy and lifelong learning, special emphasis is placed on employment training for women in nontraditional employment. Indiana uses Perkins local funds to provide support services to increase access/success rates in vocational programs for low-income students. JTPA 8-percent funds targeted "education-to-work transition" programs in 1994. A portion of these funds is used for the 21st Century Scholars program for guaranteed tuition for attendance at public, postsecondary institutions in Indiana. Jobs for Mississippi Graduates (JMG) is a school-to-work transition program designed to assist at-risk and disadvantaged youth in graduating from high school and in finding and keeping quality jobs. This approach provides a strategy for reducing youth unemployment and dropout rates while increasing graduation rates among the nation's most at-risk youth. Plans are being developed to increase the number of grade levels being served by the program. As a part of New Hampshire welfare reform, projects are provided in middle schools for at-risk students in association with school-to-work opportunities regional team activities. Ohio's Occupational Labs prepare students to obtain and hold a job. The goal of the Occupational Work Experience (OWE) program is to help at-risk students attain high school graduation, supplemented by paid employment in single/semi-skilled occupations.

Students with Limited English Proficiency

Among the acknowledged barriers to students with limited English proficiency (LEP) are the lack of appropriately trained teachers to support student needs, limited assessment capacity of educators to accurately identify levels of English proficiency, limited materials for programs to improve English proficiency, lack of teacher/employer knowledge about diverse cultures, and low expectations of students. State strategies designed to address these barriers and provide program access to students with limited English proficiency include the following:

- Provision of a range of student support services, such as tutors, translators, peer mentors, and translated materials
- Professional development resources for teachers and work-site supervisors
- Special state funds to local school districts for language-development assistance.

As with other populations of students, school-to-work efforts are building on other existing programs and organizations with experience in supporting the needs of this student group. Table 5 lists the range of strategies developed by states.

Student Supports

In Mississippi, LEP students enrolled in a vocational program are provided tutorial services and translated materials, and given all the support necessary to be successful in their school-to-work transition programs. Nevada provides teacher aides for LEP students and

Table 5

Strategies for Students with Limited English Proficiency

Strategies	States
Student supports	Mississippi, Nevada, Oklahoma, Texas
Collaboration and partnership activities	Iowa, Kentucky
Federal or state programs and policies	Indiana, Ohio, Oregon, Virgin Islands,Texas

other bilingual assistance. Oklahoma provides career awareness and development, counseling, plans of study, and other preparatory services. Texas requires each school district with more than 20 students identified as LEP to establish programs to improve students' English language abilities. LEP students are provided instruction in mathematics, science, health, and social studies both in their home language and in English.

Collaboration and Partnership Activities

Iowa is collaborating with English as a Second Language programs to provide work-site interpreters. The Kentucky Departments of Adult Education and Education will provide professional development resources for teachers and work-site supervisors in communities with LEP students. Local Partnership Councils will work with PICs and local education agencies to identify work-site learning opportunities for students. The State Office of School-to-Work will collaborate with state business, labor, and industry organizations to develop a Linguistic Minorities Advisory Group.

Federal or State Programs and Policies

Indiana is using Perkins local funds to develop bilingual recruitment materials and provide tutors, translators, and peer mentors for vocational programs to improve access/success rates. Ohio's Occupational Work Adjustment (OWA), a cooperative vocational education program, provides learning experiences related to work adjustment in private and public paid employment. Local programs target support to diverse student populations including Laotian and Hispanic communities.

In Oregon, students for whom English is a second language have access to academic programs that promote their proficiency in English while assisting them to maintain their native languages. Oregon schools have built capacity to serve these students since the early 1970s through federal bilingual aid (Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) funds. State school funding also provides an additional .5 ADM (Average Daily Membership) to schools providing language development assistance that meets criteria of the Civil Rights Act. These programs also address the requirements of the Oregon Educational Act's Certificate for Initial Mastery (CIM) for literacy in at least two languages. As students gain English proficiency, they will be better positioned to fully participate in School-to-Work Opportunities programs.

Texas uses Perkins Act funds to provide linguistically appropriate programs, services, recruiting materials, activities, assessments, and instructional and supportive materials for individuals who are members of special populations. The Virgin Islands encourages each school to select or develop a career education program that will assist LEP students to become successful in the academic and work worlds.

Students from Rural Communities with Low Population Density

A number of states have developed strategies for ensuring participation of students from rural communities. States are developing work-based learning opportunities, such as school-based enterprises, for students from rural areas. States are also developing strategies to link these students to other state school-to-work activities and programs. Table 6 lists the range of strategies cited by states.

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Table 6

Strategies for Students from Rural Communities with Low Population Density

Strategies	States
Student supports	Iowa, Oklahoma
Work-based learning/school-to-work models	Illinois, Iowa, Mississippi, Nevada, Ohio
Technical assistance	Wisconsin
Federal or state programs and policies	Mississippi, Virgin Islands, Wisconsin

Student Supports

Iowa will provide mentors. Oklahoma will focus on career awareness and development, counseling, and employer recruitment, and will create demonstration sites in rural areas.

Work-Based Learning/School-to-Work Models

Illinois is issuing a request for proposals to develop work-based learning opportunities for this population; and Iowa will focus on the development of school-based enterprises to provide school-to-work experiences for students. Mississippi will make provisions for students from low-density rural areas or districts to attend training programs in districts where strong school-to-work programs are offered. Nevada will provide alternative school-to-work opportunities for students in rural areas. Ohio will create opportunities for students to develop technical skills through expansion of Tech Prep.

Technical Assistance

Wisconsin is organizing regional technical assistance activities. A lead entity has been identified within each of 16 regions defined by technical college districts to act as the primary provider of technical assistance to local partnerships. Local partners in each region will convene to coordinate program development and delivery, share ideas, and resolve appropriate issues collectively. Each regional council will designate an entity to provide leadership in organizing, providing, brokering, or assessing technical assistance within the region. Potential providers include technical colleges, school districts, cooperative educational service agencies, chambers of commerce, private industry councils, and private or public colleges and universities. The state will award the designated entity grant funds to assist in the provision of services. Each entity will receive special state efforts in training, strategic planning, facilitation, and other capacity-building activities.

Federal or State Programs and Policies

Distance learning, electronic networks, and consortia are also strategies used to link youth in sparsely populated areas with school-to-work programs. Low-density rural districts in Mississippi will be combined to form consortia to better serve the needs of students. Texas has awarded grants to help schools develop new uses for technology, with a primary focus on improving school-to-work transition for students in rural areas. One distance-learning project will use interactive fiber optic technology to link 24 small rural districts, 84 campuses, 4 universities, and 6 education service centers in 3 different parts of the state. Students, community members, and faculty will have access to courses, activities, and options previously unavailable due to district size and location. The Virgin Islands will provide videotaped career education components on public educational television programs. Programs will be accompanied by curriculum guides to support classroom discussions and required homework activities. Wisconsin is encouraging the development of common membership in an on-line electronic network among all local partnerships. The state will encourage as many local partners as possible (e.g., schools, employers, technical colleges, intermediaries) to join this network. The network is a way of quickly sharing information, program designs, evaluations, self-assessments, cur-

Table 7

Strategies for Academically Talented Students

Strategies	States
Student supports	Mississippi, Oklahoma, Virgin Islands
Work-based learning/school-to-work models	Ohio, Texas
Collaboration and partnerships	Iowa, Kentucky
Comprehensive/inclusive strategies	Wisconsin, Texas

riculum products, and other products among local practitioners.

Academically Talented Students

Among efforts to include academically talented students in school-to-work opportunity programs, states are employing the following strategies:

- Developing career pathways incorporating work-site learning experiences for careers requiring four-year and advanced degrees
- Expanding Tech Prep and postsecondary articulations
- Relying on general efforts such as raising standards, integrating academic and occupational curricula, and providing applied learning experiences and enhanced career guidance and career mapping.

As with efforts to ensure inclusion of other student groups, collaboration with other agencies and provision of student supports are key strategies. Table 7 lists the range of strategies developed by states.

Student Supports

Mississippi will develop school-to-work marketing strategies to emphasize wider career options to attract academically talented students. Oklahoma will provide career awareness and development, counseling, outreach and awareness activities, marketing, and pilot programs to support the inclusion of academically talented students. The Virgin Islands will provide materials and resources to enrich the career education and development of academically talented students. Students will have opportunities to participate in a variety of work-based experiences, including career shadowing activities, on-the-job training, and field trips to their specific occupation-related interest.

Work-Based Learning/School-to-Work Models

Ohio will continue expansion of Tech Prep and joint administration of the program by the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Board of Regents. The effort currently includes 24 consortia with 39 colleges, 320 secondary school districts, and 60 academic programs. In Texas, Tech-Prep programs must include four years of high school courses linked to postsecondary options, many including work-based components. As of summer 1994, Tech-Prep programs were offered in 500 of the state's 663 independent school districts with at least one high school and 55 of the state's 70 community colleges. An estimated 90,000 Texas students were enrolled in Tech-Prep programs at the secondary and postsecondary levels.

Collaboration and Partnerships

The Iowa school-to-work effort will be implemented in collaboration with staff of talented and gifted programs to ensure curriculum acceleration activities for identified youth. The Kentucky Departments of Education and Employment Services, and the Council on Higher Education, will collaborate with business, industry, and labor organizations to develop career path profiles incorporating work-site learning experiences for careers requiring four-year and advanced degrees. The Council on Higher Education will work with institutions of higher education, business, industry, and

labor organizations to increase recognition among admissions officials of the value of work-site learning experiences. The Council on Higher Education and the Department of Technical Education will work with business, labor, and industry organizations and institutions of higher education to develop training and resources for faculty in methods of incorporating work-site learning experiences into the curriculum. A Business Owner/Human Resource Officer Speaker's Bureau will be organized to increase awareness among students and parents of the value of experiential learning and prior work experience.

Comprehensive/Inclusive Strategies

Wisconsin's and Texas' planned approaches are applicable for all students. These approaches include developing higher standards, integrated curricula, and hands-on learning experiences; and providing enhanced career guidance, career mapping, exposure to technical subject matter, and postsecondary articulation possibilities.

School Dropouts

Preventing students from dropping out of school is a major concern of many states. Among prevention strategies are efforts to provide appropriate student supports such as early and intensive career exploration and exposure beginning in the middle grades and to develop more relevant curricula and new teaching strategies to engage youth and deter them from dropping out of school. A number of dropout prevention programs, as well as programs targeting out-of-school-youth and alternative learning environments, are already in place in the states to help youth complete their education and prepare for employment. States are developing systemic linkages with these programs to ensure that work-force preparation and opportunities for continued education are available in the spectrum of state and local services and programs. Critical to the success of including out-of-school youth in school-to-work programs is establishing collaborations and coordinating programming with community-based and other organizations, as well as federal programs such as JTPA that typically serve these youth. Table 8 lists the range of strategies developed by states.

Student Supports

Iowa will expand its outreach activities to provide services to dropouts. Oklahoma is providing career awareness and development, parent counseling and training, specific programs for dropouts, and outreach and awareness activities. Oregon is using a strategy of providing intensive career exploration and exposure to the workplace in middle schools and early in the high school years to help keep potential dropouts in school. These experiences are designed to motivate and prepare students for advanced instruction leading to the workplace and postsecondary education programs. Through closer contacts with teachers and employers, the goal is to create more stabilizing influences for at-risk youth. Texas seeks to reduce its dropout rate by providing enhanced career guidance and counseling and identifying students who are at risk of dropping out and providing them with appropriate services.

Table 8

Strategies for School Dropouts

Strategies	States
Student supports	Iowa, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas
Restructured schools and new instructional methods	Illinois, Texas
Alternative learning opportunities	Kentucky, New York, South Carolina, Virgin Islands, Washington, Wisconsin
Collaboration and partnerships	Iowa, Kentucky, Mississippi, Nevada, New Hampshire, Oregon, Texas
Federal and state programs and policies	Indiana, New York, Ohio, South Dakota, Texas, Washington

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Restructured Schools and New Instructional Methods

Illinois seeks to reduce the number of dropouts by providing more relevant curriculum in schools and new teaching strategies. Texas plans to achieve this goal by integrating academic and vocational instruction, raising expectations for all students, and encouraging teaching techniques that motivate students and help them learn more effectively.

Alternative Learning Opportunities

To help youth avoid the stigma of returning to the school environment from which they experienced failure or push out, Kentucky will establish a number of nontraditional learning settings and expand service hours to include nights and weekends. Adult Education centers, employment services, homeless shelters, spouse abuse centers, migrant education programs, community action agencies, and other community-based organizations will also be used as learning sites to provide a range of more convenient hours and options for instruction. Focus will also be on counseling, improved assessment, and individualized student plans. The Department of Adult Education will develop targeted recruitment materials and strategies. Washington is offering extended day programs for out-of-school youth, with a competency-based skilled training curriculum integrated with academics. The state provides an additional $500 per student to cover the extra costs for services that include student advocates/case managers; child care; GED testing; assessment, counseling, and independent study; testing; campus supervision; learning centers; security; job placement; competency-based programs; and a nine-month follow-up for program completers.

Other states are combining state and federal program resources to provide not only important prevention services but also alternative learning environments. In addition to making systemic linkages with existing support programs, New York will seek to expand and enhance current alternative learning environments that enable students at risk of not succeeding in the traditional school structure to achieve their educational and career goals. South Carolina will recruit students of high school age to return to school and attend special dropout prevention programs such as Target 2000 and have access to school-to-work programs. Using the media, the Virgin Islands will encourage dropouts to attend adult education classes. In addition to classes, counseling services are provided. Community resource people provide information on job readiness and assist students in developing employability.

Wisconsin requires local partnerships to develop specific strategies to ensure that young people who have dropped out of school can enter into School to Work Opportunities programs. Wisconsin has opportunities for students to participate in alternative programs that combine basic skills training with school-to-work components, including work experience programs, to complete a high school equivalency diploma (HSED). These programs allow students to take courses at a technical college. State funding is available to support alternative programs through grants.

Collaboration and Partnerships

The Iowa school-to-work initiative will collaborate with school staff dealing with at-risk youth in regular and alternative schools; and coordinate efforts JTPA programs. The Kentucky Office of School-to-Work will collaborate with business, industry and labor organizations to develop a Speaker's Bureau to introduce students to role models from various occupations and populations. Mississippi is developing goals and strategies through a collaborative partnership among the Mississippi Departments of Education, Human Services, and Economic and Community Development to reduce the dropout rate and to get those youth who have dropped out back into school-to-work programs.

Nevada's school-to-work effort will develop close relationship with alternative and reentry programs. In New Hampshire, the Governor's task force on school dropouts includes STWOA representation. As part of its School-to-Work Opportunities System, Oregon will establish collaborative partnerships with community-based organizations and correctional institutions that often serve as the only point of institutional contact for many dropouts. By working with the people who are most familiar with the needs and interests of out-of-school youth, the state will conduct outreach efforts to bring these young people into local school-to-work programs. The Texas Education Agency, Higher Education Coordinating Board, Department of Commerce, and Council on Workforce and Economic Competitiveness work together to

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coordinate activities to improve the school-to-work readiness of all Texans. While the infrastructure for these coordinated efforts is still developing, one focus is to help young people stay in school and to provide additional opportunities for people who have left school without securing a high school diploma.

Federal or State Programs and Policies

Indiana and Texas use JTPA 8-percent, Education-to-Work grants to provide services to in- and out-of-school youth. The goal is to retain at-risk students in school or to return dropouts to regular school, alternative school, or GED programs. New York will make appropriate linkages and provide support to the many dropout prevention and outreach programs, both federally and state funded, to ensure that work-force preparation and opportunities for continued education are systematically provided.

Ohio has a number of programs focusing on dropout prevention or reclaiming dropouts. Graduation Reality and Dual Role Skills (GRADS) is an instructional and intervention program for pregnant and parenting students that focuses on staying in school, developing positive health care and parenting practices, improving employability skills, and establishing personal and career goals. Graduation, Occupation, and Living Skills (GOALS) is a job-readiness program that helps single parents who have dropped out of school complete their education, train for a job, and be a better parent. The Assistance in the Development of Vocational, Academic, and Technical Education Skills (Advocates) program is being piloted in eight districts. In this program, advocates provide a seamless support system for youth, ages 14–22, who are at risk of dropping out of school. Throughout this program, one advocate will work with 36–48 identified students to assist them in attaining basic academic skills, passing the Ohio Proficiency Examination, entering and completing occupationally-specific programming, graduating, and becoming gainfully employed in a skilled occupation after graduation.

South Dakota has a number of existing programs to serve out-of-school youth, including alternative schools, JTPA, and vocational follow-up. These programs are part of the state's overall school-to-work system plan. Washington offers out-of-school youth opportunities to attend Extended Day School-to-Work Transition Skill Centers and Technical Colleges. It also has a Jobs for America's Graduates Program (JAG) to target and keep at-risk youth in school and in transition to employment. The Texas Education Agency maintains a computerized data base of successful programs and practices, including those that have been successful in serving dropouts.

Other Populations of Youth

Three states identified strategies affecting other youth populations. Strategies specifically addressed the needs of youthful offenders, parenting teens, and students in private schools and those in home schooling.

Ohio's Student Transition Education and Employment Program (STEEP) provides transition activities for released youthful offenders to lead them into vocational programs or labs associated with prior vocational training. Oklahoma provides child care, psychological services, social work services, transportation, marketing and public relations of school-to-work opportunities for teen and single parents. Oregon law requires public school programs, including school-to-work opportunities activities, to be accessible to private school and home schooled students.

Conclusion

The states surveyed represent a plethora of programs and approaches to prepare, support, and sustain involvement of students with a variety of special needs in school-to-work activities. This may mean reliance on federal and state mandates and laws requiring inclusion of special student populations in program activities. This may mean provision of student supports such as remediation and tutoring, as well as role models and mentors. It may mean the availability of different teaching/learning approaches geared to the individual's learning style, or range of work experience activities designed to motivate and sustain student interest and success. This may also mean the availability of alternative learning sites with variable hours of instruction.

In several states, outreach and measures such as requiring subcontractors and local partnerships to develop strategies for including students with special needs are being put in place. In many cases, states recognize the value of linking their school-to-work efforts with those of organizations and agencies that typically provide services to youth with special needs. Several states realize the value of multiple strategies to provide a range of opportunities for youth. Others rely on all-encompassing approaches to improve services and instruction for all youth. They stress that important changes are required in the structure of education, such as greater reliance on experiential and contextual learning with opportunities for application in a work or community setting; improved career guidance services; and strengthened standards and raised student expectations. In a number of states, equity, participation and achievement by special needs students are becoming important program outcome measures, including critical factors in determining program performance and workplace suitability as a learning site. Other states are creating special technical assistance and staff development activities, materials to ensure proper staff and student awareness, and resources to support the success of students.